



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Arkansas River Outfitters Association Launch 2026 Season with Strong Economic Momentum and New Strategic Partnership

Arkansas River Valley, Colorado — [Insert Date] — As Colorado’s spring and summer recreation season approaches, the Arkansas River community is preparing for another exciting summer on one of the most iconic whitewater rivers in the United States. Today, the Arkansas River Outfitters Association (AROA) announced the start of the 2026 rafting season, along with a new strategic partnership naming Obviouslee as the agency of record to amplify the story of the Arkansas River and the communities it supports.

The Arkansas River remains a powerful economic engine for rural Colorado. A recent economic value analysis estimates the commercial rafting and outfitter industry generates between \$50 and \$60 million annually in economic activity, supporting hundreds of jobs and local businesses throughout the Arkansas River corridor.



A family enjoys a scenic rafting trip on the Arkansas River. Photo courtesy of Performance Tours via the Arkansas River Outfitters Association (AROA).



Visitors travel from across the country to experience the Arkansas River, with approximately 75% of rafting guests coming from outside Colorado. Their spending on lodging, restaurants, retail, and transportation creates a ripple effect that supports communities in Chaffee, Fremont, and surrounding counties.

“This river is more than a recreation destination—it’s a lifeline for the communities along the Arkansas River Valley,” said Mark Hammer, Arkansas River Outfitters Association. “Every rafting trip supports local guides, restaurants, hotels, and small businesses that rely on a vibrant summer tourism season.”

Building momentum for the 2026 rafting season

Interest in outdoor recreation has surged in recent years, and outfitters along the Arkansas River are preparing to welcome visitors for the 2026 season. Across the valley, operators are gearing up for a full season on the river. While the Royal Gorge and Browns Canyon continue to offer challenging whitewater, much of the river provides approachable, family-friendly experiences. Many outfitters offer inflatable kayak tours, stand-up paddleboard instruction, and other guided river experiences.

“It’s not just about rafting or fishing. It’s about getting families outside in nature, spending time together outside, and seeing Colorado from a different lens,” said Billy Marquis, Owner of Arkansas River Tours.

“About 70 percent of our guests are booking Class III or lower trips, which shows that for many people, the Arkansas River is really about a fun, approachable, family-friendly day outside,” said Travis Hochard, COO of River Runners.

Water conditions on the Arkansas River are supported by a collaborative water management system that balances agricultural, municipal, ecological and recreational needs. The Arkansas River has a long history of supporting a dependable and enjoyable recreation season, with conditions closely monitored throughout.

To expand awareness of the Arkansas River experience, AROA has partnered with Obviouslee x Meteorite PR to support strategic communications and media outreach for the organization. The partnership will help share stories about the Arkansas River and promote the Arkansas River Valley as one of Colorado’s premier outdoor destinations.

“Our goal is to bring national and regional attention to what makes the Arkansas River special,” said Eric Henderson, COO at Obviouslee x Meteorite PR. “From family rafting trips to the local businesses and communities that depend on the river, the Arkansas River Valley is a cornerstone of Colorado’s outdoor recreation economy.”

Commercial rafting and guided river trips play a central role in sustaining the broader outdoor recreation economy of the Arkansas River Valley. Visitor spending tied to river trips supports



lodging, restaurants, retail, and service businesses throughout the region, providing a critical summer boost for rural communities along the river corridor.

Beyond direct economic impact, the Arkansas River also supports broader community benefits. Outdoor recreation supports public health, strengthens community identity, and helps attract new residents and businesses drawn to the quality of life offered by the Arkansas River Valley.

AROA members also continue to invest in expanding access to the outdoors. Each spring, outfitters partner with the Boys and Girls Club to provide rafting trips for hundreds of local youth across the Front Range and surrounding communities. For many participants, it is their first time visiting the mountains or experiencing a river like the Arkansas.

Programs like these highlight the role that rafting plays not only in tourism but also in creating opportunities for young people to connect with Colorado's landscapes and outdoor recreation.

As preparations continue for the 2026 season, outfitters across the Arkansas River Valley are looking forward to welcoming returning visitors and first-time adventurers to experience one of Colorado's most iconic rivers. Visitors can learn more about the Arkansas River experience and find licensed outfitters at arkansasriveroutfitters.org and raftthebest.com

About Arkansas River Outfitters Association (AROA)

The Arkansas River Outfitters Association represents professional outfitters providing rafting, kayaking, and fly fishing experiences along the Arkansas River. Together, members offer safe, high-quality adventures for visitors from around the world.

About Obviouslee

Obviouslee incubates ideas, builds relationships, and delivers real results for causes, brands, and partners we believe in. As a certified B Corporation, we use business as a force for good and, as a female-founded and led marketing agency, we are a proud member of WBENC. Established in 2005 and headquartered in Charleston, SC, our team spans the globe, collaborating on marketing and creative campaigns with clients ranging from emerging entrepreneurs to iconic brands. We are honored to partner with organizations making a difference in the impact, sports and events, and outdoor industries. To learn more, visit obviouslee.com.

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